

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held over Zoom, Cambridge on Friday 3rd April 2020

Members Present

President: R A Smith

Master: E Hopper

Secretary: J H J Ellison

Jonathan Shanklin	Dickon Love	Ian Vincent
Samuel Johnson	Rebecca Harwin	Ken Darvill
Christopher Winkless-Clark	Andrew Johnson	Claire Barlow
Melissa Nash	Nicolas Small	Imogen Smith
David Richards	Clarke Walters	Stella Johnson
John Hutchinson	Robin Shipp	Greg Chu
Dima Szamozvancev	Harry Rodgers	Barry Johnson
Edward Gardner	Luke Smith	

The President reminds the meeting of the operating procedures previously circulated given the meeting is being held over Zoom. The meeting generally agreed that despite the rules not allowing for a meeting over zoom this was acceptable given the COVID-19 pandemic. No requests were made for secret votes to be held during the meeting.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Frank King and David Smith.

2. Minutes of the AGM meeting 2019

No members raised issues with the accuracy of the minutes.

An overwhelming majority accepted them as a true account, with no objections.

3. Matters Arising

A question was raised over the current situation regarding the handbells. It was reported that the current situation was very satisfactory. The current situation is that one set is highly portable in a backpack and is used for most practices and the dinner. The dinner set then been used for practising for the dinner and as a second set for peak handbell ringing times.

Questions were asked about the handbell fund and the library. It was decided these would be returned to under other items in the agenda.

The President reported that the Guild website is now up and running and thanked those responsible.

4. Minutes of the Lent term business meeting 2020

The President noted that the version of the minutes on the website needed to be replaced as the current version on the website had track changes enabled. A minority of those present voted in favour of accepting them as a true account. It was speculated this was due to only a minority having been present at the Lent meeting. No objections were made to the minutes being accepted, and so the meeting adopted them as a true account.

The President noted that some of the formalisms of the meeting, such as formal proposals and seconders, have to be dispensed with given that the meeting was being held over zoom.

5. Matters Arising

The matter of the library move was raised. The Librarian submitted the following report to the meeting.

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The library move was completed on March 3rd 2020, many thanks to Claire Barlow, Paul Seaman and the President for organising the move. Currently, all the books are in the two bookshelves on the left side of the ringing chamber when looking down to the church. The Ringing Worlds are now placed on the window reveals on the left, in 5 stacks. There are 3 main tasks left to be done: Performing an audit, Reorganising the books and Purchasing new bookshelves for the bounded ringing worlds.

The pictures below are the Library immediately after the move.



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The President thanks Greg, Paul, Jen and Anne for their efforts on this.

The President notes that the current arrangement is not final. The current bookcases are likely to be temporary, as they are not particularly suitable for the more valuable books. Though they are considered fine for more modern and hence less valuable books, it is likely that one of the book cases will be replaced by a more secure one in which the more valuable books will be stored. (These being mostly county histories from the Victorian and Edwardian period, valued at hundreds of pounds each). A lockable cupboard would be preferable. It was noted that the ringing room is secure from the public. Further ringing there when the President is not present is rare. It was noted that occasional electricians will visit.

The Ringing Worlds are currently stacked on the ledges behind the trebles. This is not really suitable, and they will likely go on shelves eventually. This probably would have been done if it were not for lockdown.

Claire Barlow reminds the Guild there is a working library in St Bene't's, of those books which may be useful for teaching.

Clarke Walters asks if the bookcases have glass fronts. It was stated that they do not have glass fronts. The President would like any replacement bookcases to have glass fronts. The President also clarifies that the Ringing Worlds are likely to be left on bookcases without glass fronts due to space requirements, this is unless a very large glass fronted bookcase is donated. It may be that some of the very old volumes may go in a glass bookcase.

Luke Smith points out that the bookcases are below the coat hooks and this might result in damage. The President believes the coat hooks have now been moved and will certainly be moved eventually.

Several questions were raised over the Ringing Worlds:

Do we wish to keep the Ringing Worlds?

It was stated that due to them being very common, old Ringing Worlds were essentially worthless. Keeping them thus has no opportunity cost, since the shelves would likely be donated to the Guild and selling them would make no money. The President thus suggests that they be kept in the Catholic as there is no point doing anything else.

No one raises any objection to this.

Simon Farrar and Emma Abbey joined the meeting

Should we bind the back issues of the Ringing World?

Andrew Johnson asks how many years are unbound. The Librarian says there are about fifteen years of unbound copies. The President suggests that printer paper boxes or lever arch files can store them rather than binding. Clarke Walters asked how easily accessible Ringing Worlds are. The President stated that 1911-1970 are all freely available as PDFs on the Central Council website. 1971-2000 are available only on a DVD which is for sale on the same website. The Ringing World has declined permission for free access to these years. 2001 – Present are available on BellBoard to anyone who has been a subscriber to the Ringing World for “a length of time” (this is believed to be 5 years).

The Librarian states that the cost of professional binding is believed to be £15-£20 per year. It is believed that the President is the source of this cost estimate but it is unknown, including by the President, why he thought that at the time. Claire Barlow notes that binding in Cambridge is relatively cheap and concurs with the President on the estimate of the cost for hard binding. One year of the bound Ringing Worlds is missing, it is believed this was lost in the library move preceding the most recent one.

Dickon Love stated that the utility of the collection is in its entirety. It is unknown amongst the meeting how many complete collections there are. It was highlighted that the Guild's collection is far from complete. The Secretary raises the issue that the 80s issues are often lacking some issues although they are present. It was suggested that it may be easier to acquire a complete bound version than to bind our versions.

The President stated he would investigate the possibility of obtaining back issues. Dickon Love stated he will try to find out how rare the near complete collection is. Ian Vincent asked how hard it is to find the missing years, the President states that it would be very easy.

The President reasserts that finding more information and a more definite proposal would be needed and so no decision is made at this point.

Do we wish to continue our subscription to the Ringing World?

The Librarian highlights that the UL has a complete collection and eventually the Guild will run out of shelf space. The President points out that we currently have a paper subscription, usually delivered to the Master. This is sometimes taken the practices. Some Masters do this every week whereas some are less consistent. The current rule is that tower subscriptions cannot be shared online between members of the band. Ringing World recently announced that there will be a “proper tower subscription” where a band or society can share login access to the Ringing Worlds. The pricing model is not publicly available. It is a more expensive product than the current subscription. The Guild has currently paid for the Ringing World up to Jan 2021, there is thus no urgency and it is decided that a decision be postponed to the next meeting.

Claire Barlow raised the question of where the newest copies are going. It is likely that many of these have become highly dispersed by recent Masters.

Robin Shipp voices the opinion that younger members may wish to have access to the Ringing Worlds, particularly the learners. The Librarian states that the Ringing World is mainly read between touches at practice nights and the online copy may not be suitable for this. Chris Winkless-Clark points out that the Ringing World is available at GSM for those who are interested, and it does get perused at this time. Stella Johnson states that learners are likely to get less out of the Ringing World than the more experienced ringers. At the current time we have a lot of learners. Ian Vincent states that it would be possible to utilise the online copy on one’s phone. The President also stated that a more mobile friendly version has been written. John Hutchinson suggests that as learners stay on after the teaching session at Benet’s’, this would be a good place to bring the Ringing World, in a physical copy, for them to read. Edward Gardner, a recent learner, suggests that learners may not be enormously interested in the Ringing World and lack of experience makes it hard to understand what is going on.

The President states that the Ringing World has a new editor, which perhaps will result in a fresher, more dynamic feel so this discussion might be worth revisiting, though the President does confirm that it is aimed at more stabilised ringers. The President suggest deferring the decision to a meeting where we have more information on the new pricing model, as we are currently subscribed until January. This was generally agreed to by the meeting.

6. New Members

No new members were proposed at the meeting.

7. Cambridge towers

Chris Winkless-Clark, the Steeplekeeper submitted the following report on StAG:

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This year has been rather busy from a steeple keeper’s perspective. Replacing the broken slider on the 3rd proved more difficult than expected due to a variety of issues, primarily the significant rust levels on the frame and also the new slider initially not fitting due to the pre-drilled hole being at the wrong angle, which was fixed by drilling a new hole. It is worth noting that Taylor’s recommends not ordering a pre-drilled hole for bolts, rather doing it yourself to avoid this problem – I concur. In addition to this, the tail end on the 4th broke early in Lent term in such a way that was not repairable. A spare rope was borrowed from GSM for use as a temporary fix (my thanks to the SCY for this), until the Easter holidays when the bells would not be rung and could all have new tails spliced on by Phil Gorman (at a cost of £200 total), as they were all showing signs of significant wear. Due to the current situation, the splicing is finished, but the ropes remain with Phil until lockdown has been lifted. He recommends that we investigate buying a set of new ropes, as he feels that these ropes only really have another few years of ringing left in them, and replacements could take as much as 18 months to arrive, once ordered. There is some noticeable wear in the upper sections of the ropes, and a

spare set will make a good long-term investment, regardless of how long it may be before they are actually needed. An application to the societies syndicate could also be made to offset some of the expense, and is something that should be investigated by the incoming steeple keeper.

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President thanks Chris Winkless-Clark for his report. Chris confirms that the ropes have been sent to have re-spliced tail ends. This has been done but the ropes are currently stuck at the house where they have been re-spliced.

Barry Johnson stated that the bank account for St Clement's is now open. The faculty has been passed last month. The President reminds the meeting that there is a plan to put a light set of 8 in the church near St John's College. This would be with the aim of turning it into a teaching tower. The relevancy to the Guild particularly is the plan to purchase a bell in memory of Chris Johnson. The "bells of St Clement's" website has more information.

8. Accounts

The accounts were circulated before the meeting and the Secretary noted a few comments on the accounts.

Nicholas Small asks if we are going to pay the Central Council this year. The Secretary states that we are going to pay the Central Council. The Secretary had thought that we needed to know the number of representatives we are sending. It turns out that this is not the case, and the amount owed is the same regardless of the number of representatives. Thus, the Secretary states his intention to pay the Central Council very shortly.

Imogen Smith questions why the interest rate on the account appears to be zero. The Secretary clarifies that the interest rate on the main account is virtually zero. However due to the current pandemic it is not very easy to ascertain how much interest has been paid. Thus, as a conservative estimate zero interest was put in the accounts.

It was proposed to provisionally accept the accounts, subject to the accounts being examined and accepted.

A clear majority votes in favour of this and there are no votes against.

It is highlighted that there has previously been talk of abolishing the handbell fund. The Secretary clarifies that this has not happened. Details of exactly why this has not happened are not available at present due to Frank King's absence. It is believed that it has not been removed as it is a useful tool for keeping track of nominally how much money is available for handbell "insurance". However, it is only a guideline and future committees should not feel that that money is "reserved" for handbells.

It is noted that an assets list should have been included, however due to lockdown this has not been done. It is still the intention that it be included in a future version of the accounts.

9. Officers reports

The Master submitted the following report:

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The Guild has had another busy and successful year. As reported in my newsletter in January we had our traditional rounders match and picnic with the Cambridge Youths, the alternative dinner at Jesus College in May Week and attended the Ridgman Trophy contest, where we finished seventh out of eight. In May Week we also had a punting outing, several pub trips and even some handbell practices.

Guild Week was very well organised by Jonathan Shanklin, and we went to Sleaford and the surrounding area. The trip included two quarters in tower and one in hand in the pub. In August, we also had a Guild Holiday near to Welshpool for current and recent students. Many thanks to Oli and Megan Bardsley for organising this.

Once again in October, we used the Charnborough Ring at Parker's Piece for the Freshers' Fair, attracting a lot of interest and quite a few now enthusiastic learners. Thank you very much to those who helped at the Fresher's Fair and learners' practices, especially to Melissa Nash for all her teaching organisation. We also gained several existing ringers and manage to have healthy numbers consistently at Thursday StAG practices, often managing surprise minor and plain triples, and sometimes surprise major.

Our Freshers' cycle outing went to Longstanton, Swavesey and Oakington – thanks to John for organising. Some of the Guild attended the SUA in Oxford in November, and we also had our London outing in November – thanks to Alastair Benford for organising this. In October we also had a well-attended formal at Downing college, and in December a Christmas dinner hosted by Chris Winkless-Clark and Shirui Lu.

For the 2020 new year, the Guild visited Melissa in Bedford. Just before the end of the Christmas break, eight of our members took part in the ART module 2 teaching course and at the start of the Michaelmas term, we had a three-day bootcamp for returning and new learners. We had a very busy term, including another well attended formal, this time at Christs' College, another pancake day social hosted by James Ellison, and two quarters – Harry's first and Shirui's first away from cover.

We were very sad to have had to cancel the annual dinner due to the Covid-19 pandemic. I am especially grateful to James Ellison, John Hutchinson, Richard Smith and Melissa Nash for their help in both the organisation and the cancellation of the dinner. Fortunately, we were able to achieve three quarters and a peal, and see some of our members who were still around for the weekend. I'll take this opportunity to remind those who haven't claimed their refund to reply to James' email from 31/03/2020. This term has been and will be unusual for the Guild, who are normally very busy during Easter term, but we will come through the other side and I wish the new officers the best of luck.

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The President thanked Elizabeth, and other officers for their efforts on the dinner. This was a particularly challenging task to organise and to reorganise events at short notice this year. The Secretary also thanked David Richards for his help with refunds.

John Hutchinson, Assistant Master, submitted the following report:

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Ringling at Bene't's has been proceeding for the most part as normal, though with a particular focus in incorporating learners from the prior teaching session into the main practice.

This has led to a delicate balance needing to be struck between the needs of the two groups. Learners learn best when there is a strong band around them, that is, they receive their best practice at more well-attended practices where there are more secure ringers to place around them. However, the greater number of more experienced ringers also increases the demand for more advanced ringing, and furthermore different levels of experience mean that there is greater demand for more advanced sorts of ringing which are also valuable (e.g. on a particular night there may be cause to ring touches of Plain Bob Doubles, Grandsire and Surprise Minor), reducing the opportunities learners have to ring. This often results in learners leaving partway through the practice if they feel they are not getting any practice. Future Assistant Masters should give these matters considerations if teaching is to continue in its current pattern, likely by means of careful forethought and planning several touches in advance.

In other news Sunday morning ringing has remained stable in terms of numbers and looks set to remain so next year due to an increase in student attendance, though overall student attendance is still (perhaps somewhat understandably) low. Additionally, handbell practices have largely become separate to Bene't's, but on the plus side this has helped to further the aim of providing good ringing opportunities for learners.

There have been several quarters rung at Bene't's, with a noticeable concentration of firsts this year. The first quarter of the academic year was a first both for the Guild and of minor for Chris. Other firsts on the bells have included a first away from cover for Dima and a first inside for Shirley.

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John Hutchinson notes the need to balance learners and more experienced ringers. He notes no significant change in attendance, although possibly a slight increase. The entrance to Benet's has been redone.

Melissa Nash, the Teaching Officer, submitted the following report:

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It's been another busy year for teaching with three teaching sessions per week throughout Michaelmas and Lent and two ART courses. The first of these was a Module 1 course (bell handling) on 29th September 2019, attended by 6 of our current members and funded by ART Award prize money. At the Freshers' Fair, 133 people signed up to our learners mailing list and then 26 curious people attended our 'Have a Go' sessions. 21 beginners came to one or more of our weekly sessions in Michaelmas, 5 of whom were still regularly ringing with us at the end of Lent. One rang their first quarter on 'dinner' day.

In early January, 8 of our members took part in an ART Module 2C course (from rounds to methods), with the cost being funded by the Guild. As has been done in previous years, we started Lent term with an intensive 3 day refresh for learners ('Bootcamp'). In contrast to other years, we gained some additional new learners in Lent term, 6 to be precise. 3 of these were exchange students only here for a term but hopefully the other 3 will continue to ring with us when our activities resume again. Additionally, we've also had a lapsed beginner ringer join our number.

One thing that's been new this year is the use of ART Learning the Ropes Personal Progress Logbooks and becoming an ART Teaching Hub. What isn't new, however, is winning the ART Award for a University Society – we won it again this year for the third time and second year in a row! 21 people have helped at one or more teaching sessions this year, my enormous thanks to each and every one of you – you've not only made it possible but also enjoyable. I have every confidence that when ringing activities resume again, my successor will very ably lead us in picking up where we left off.

Proposal for how the 2020 ART Award prize money of £500 should be spent:

~£425 on 2020 Freshers' Fair, including hiring the Charmborough Ring

~£34 on ART Learning the Ropes Personal Progress Logbooks

Remainder towards the cost of new StAG ropes (total cost £200)

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Melissa Nash was thanked for her efforts particularly organising the ART module 2C course. Melissa Nash thanked everyone who had assisted with teaching over the course of the year. The meeting generally approved of the proposed use of the 2020 ART money.

10. Election of officers

The President hands over the chair of the meeting to the Master for the election of the senior officers. The following officers were proposed:

a. Senior Officers

President: Richard Smith, Proposer: Sam Johnson, Seconder: Chris Winkless-Clark

Senior Treasurer: David Richards, Proposer: Oliver Bardsley, Seconder: Benedict M'Caw

Accounts Examiner: Frank King, Proposer: James Ellison, Seconder: Luke Smith

All elected with overwhelming support none against. The President thanks the meeting for his election and resumes chairing the meeting. The following junior officers were proposed:

b. Junior Officers

Master: Stella Johnson, Proposer: Chris Winkless-Clark, Seconder: Melissa Nash
Assistant Master: Jonathan Nash, Proposer: Stella Johnson, Seconder: John Hutchinson
Secretary: Greg Chu, Proposer: Rebecca Harwin, Seconder: Stella Johnson
Teaching officer: Dima Szamozvancev, Proposer: Melissa Nash, Seconder: Rebecca Harwin
Steeple Keeper: Chris Winkless-Clark, Proposer: John Hutchinson, Seconder: Greg Chu
Librarian: Harry Rodgers, Proposer: James Ellison, Seconder: Dima Szamozvancev

All elected with overwhelming support none against.

11. Diary Dates

Guild Week – 07/08/20-12/08/20

The President notes that Guild Week is 07/08/20-12/08/20. It will be organised along the format of the last 5 years and held in Shropshire. Some arrangements were made before lockdown. It then became clear that people were unwilling to commit to future arrangements. The President has put on hold all organisation. It is likely that we will continue lockdown for at least 6 weeks. The President thus considers it unlikely that Guild Week will go ahead in its current format. The President suggests that we still use this time, if lockdown has been lifted, though it may not be the same format nor in Shropshire and will be highly situationally dependent. The President regrets he cannot offer any further details at this time.

Clarke Walters reiterates that it would be nice to keep the dates and even if it were not the full event, he suggests meeting via zoom or ringing stadium as an alternative, or trying to meet around Christmas.

12. Any other business

12a. Central Council representatives' election

The President states that we are entitled to two representatives. James Dann, one of our current representatives does not wish to stand for re-election. David Richards states that the restructuring of the CC means it is no longer as important if someone is a representative or not.

Clarke Walters says that the Guild has contributed a lot to the Central Council over the years. He thinks that it would be good if others could be encouraged to join the CC. The President says it would be nice for the Guild to try and remain active, as the CC does aim to increase its support of university ringing. The President suggest that it is worth thinking about electing a second person. The meeting is not until September, so we have time to think about this.

Ian Vincent suggests that the CC meeting will be less relevant this year due to the cancellation of the main meeting in Nottingham. David Richards is waiting for an announcement regarding a future meeting.

12b. Rule change

The intention of the rule change was circulated at the Lent business meeting.

The only modification that was substantive was that postal voting be allowed in the event of dissolution of the Guild. It is reiterated that postal voting is not allowed for any other vote. The President and others feel that if such a vote were ever to take place it would be a substantive enough situation that widening participation would be justified.

The President reminds the meeting that this rule change is at the request of the Junior Proctor's office. In order to remain an affiliated society we have to include these rules, essentially as a box ticking exercise. It is believed that political societies have recently caused some inconvenience for the Proctors, so they are trying to unify some of the rules of the societies, such that the Proctors have some understanding of each societies'

rules. It is not that the Guild is being particularly targeted. If we do not make these changes it is likely that we will be struck off as a university society. This would result in a loss of several advantages. The President thus suggests that it is not worth fighting the Proctors on this. The President stresses we have no desire to dissolve the Guild. Indeed, it is likely that adopting these rules will make it harder to dissolve the Guild due to there being a formal process, whereas at present a simple majority could theoretically dissolve the Guild.

Claire Barlow notes that other societies have taken out insurance against Senior Treasurers being sued. This is likely to not be a concern for the Guild due to its good financial health.

Greg Chu asked to clarify if "postal voting" includes email. The President suggests that it would be up to the officers at the time how to organise the vote. Thus, the rule is deliberately intended to not exclude or include email or any other voting method. The meeting feels that some sort of electronic voting should be possible, but it agrees that it should be left up to the officers at the time.

Melissa Nash suggests using the wording "remote" rather than "postal" to clarify that it is not just via post. This is generally agreed to by the meeting.

Thus, the President proposes to append the following to rule 5.2(c):

The Senior Treasurer shall not be liable for any financial debt or other obligation of the Guild unless he or she has personally authorised such a debt in writing.

And to add a new rule 12, entitled 'Dissolution', reading as follows:

The Guild may be dissolved only at an Annual General Meeting of the Guild with the consent of not less than two-thirds of the Full Members present, and only after twenty-one days' written notice of the intention to dissolve the Guild has been given to the members under rule 4.1(e). Provision shall be made for remote participation in any such vote. Any motion for the dissolution of the Guild shall provide that assets remaining after all liabilities have been met shall be transferred either to another Registered University Society or to the Societies Syndicate.

The amendments were passed together by more than a two-thirds majority.

The President notes that the rules on the website are not up to date. James Ellison apologises for this and will aim to get these updated.

The incoming officers introduce themselves to the meeting.

Clarke Walters proposed a vote of thanks to the President, for keeping the Guild going particularly in these strange times. This was generally agreed to by the meeting

The President closed the meeting at 15:44.

J H J Ellison